

Washington, DC -- On Friday, January 12, Congressman Joe Sestak left Washington, DC to return to his congressional district for the long weekend, where he will attend numerous events and focus on his office's constituent services, while commemorating Martin Luther King at church and community events. With the district and his office being Joe's highest priority as a member of Congress, Joe concluded his first full week in Washington by working on each of the four pillars of national security that he ran on: education, defense, economic, and health security.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Education and Labor Committee**

On Tuesday, Joe was appointed to the influential Education and Labor Committee, formerly called the Committee on Education and Workforce. The Education and Labor Committee has jurisdiction over a broad range of issues: pre-K through high school and secondary education; childcare services; Head Start; child abuse/domestic violence prevention programs; vocational and technical education and job training; workers' wages and benefits; worker safety; Family and Medical Leave Act; and private pensions.

Added Joe: "I intend to use my seat on the committee to ensure there is priority placed upon key areas that have been shown to have a significant impact upon individual prosperity and economic growth, such as early childhood education, affordable access to college, and attracting and rewarding quality teachers. And I look forward to addressing significant workforce and labor issues, such as health benefits, pension security, and other issues important to this district and working families."

### **House Armed Services Committee**

On Thursday, Joe received his House Armed Services Committee (HASC) subcommittee assignments. Joe is the only freshmen with three subcommittee assignments, and he was handpicked by Committee Chairman Ike Skelton (D-MO) and Subcommittee Chairman Marty Meehan (D-MA) to be the only freshman on the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.

"I'm delighted to have Joe serve on this subcommittee, as he brings 31 years of national security experience, expertise, and leadership to this choice assignment for a freshmen member, and I look forward to working with him to provide the necessary oversight for this country's military operations," noted Representative Marty Meehan, Chair of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.

Joe's two other HASC subcommittees are: the Air and Land Forces Subcommittee and the Seapower and Expeditionary Forces Subcommittee – two strategic subcommittees in that they will allow Joe to work on building Congressional support for needed defense security interests originating from within the district, including the Chinook, which falls under the control of the Air and Land Forces Subcommittee, and the V-22 Osprey, which is under the aegis of the Seapower and Expeditionary Forces Subcommittee – two rotorcraft projects that are located at Boeing's Ridley Township plant.

On Friday, Joe, a former fire marshal in the United States Navy, also announced that he joined the Congressional Fire Services Caucus, one of only two caucuses that he has joined thus far.

"In the Navy I learned: duty, honor, courage," noted Joe. "Those values served me well in my first position as a Fire Marshal and I came to see then, what I continue to value now - the selfless commitment of so many first-responders here at home. There is no doubt that one of the greatest services in my district comes from first responders who are on the frontlines protecting us. That is why today I am proud to join the Congressional Fire Services Caucus. I believe we have a duty to do all we can to help our local fire departments so they can respond to all types of hazards."

### **DEFENSE SECURITY/IRAQ**

On Tuesday, Joe cosponsored and voted for legislation to pass a bill to implement the bipartisan 9-11 Commission recommendations, many of which have been partially implemented and others not at all. During the debate, Joe made his first statement on the House floor as a member of Congress:

“I had the honor while serving in the military of leading our youth in harm’s way overseas. But five days ago, I became responsible for a new set of citizens, the constituents of my district. And when I think about how to serve them best—and to turn their hope into accomplishment—our foremost duty is to provide for their security...this time here at home.”

On Thursday, Joe was tapped by the House Democratic Leadership to respond to President Bush’s plan to escalate the war in Iraq. He noted, “We are on the road to nowhere in Iraq, and putting more troops on that road will not get us anywhere. If these troops were needed for the safety and security of our men and women already in Iraq, then I would support the increase - but they are not.”

“The bottom-line is that the way forward is not to add more troops, but to set a deliberate timetable for re-deployment from Iraq - at least by the end of this year - to serve as a catalyst for the Iraqis to accept responsibility for their country, so we can better address our other strategic security interests throughout the world, as well as here at home.”

## **HEALTH SECURITY**

On Thursday, Joe addressed his health pillar by cosponsoring and voting for bipartisan legislation, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act (H.R. 3), allowing critical life saving stem cell research. During debate, Joe delivered his second floor speech:

“A year and a half ago, I retired from the US Navy as my then four-year-old daughter, Alex, was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor. She is here today—thanks to the wonderful medical treatment that she received from our nation’s doctors and nurses, including high-dose chemotherapy with stem cell infusion. The medical coverage I received from our country as a military member allowed my daughter to receive the best care it had to offer—the care every American child should have access to. And that is why I asked to speak to this bill, above all others. Why would we preclude the medical promise that stem cell research offers for tomorrow’s recuperative treatment or cure—not just for my daughter, but for all those Americans whose lives are afflicted by serious disease, or who now pass prematurely from us... when they might not?”

On Friday, Joe once again addressed his health pillar by cosponsoring and voting for legislation

to require the Department of Health and Human Services to negotiate for lower drug prices for American seniors and people with disabilities in the Medicare program. The Medicare Prescription Drug Negotiation Act of 2007, H.R. 4, will help seniors reduce the cost of prescription medications. The current Medicare Rx Drug law prohibits the Department of Health and Human Services from conducting such cost-reducing negotiations.

## **ECONOMIC SECURITY**

On Wednesday, Joe cosponsored and voted for legislation to increase the federal minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25 an hour, the first time since 1997. The bipartisan bill raises the minimum wage to \$5.85, 60 days after enactment; to \$6.55 one year later; and to \$7.25 within two years. According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, increasing the minimum wage would add \$4400 per year for a family a three, equaling 15 months of groceries, over two years of health care, or over two years of community college tuition. This would benefit an estimated 6.6 million workers directly and another 8.3 million indirectly, according to the Economic Policy Institute. This includes hundreds of thousand of parents with children under the age of 18.

## **EDUCATION SECURITY**

Next Wednesday, Joe has cosponsored and he plans to vote for a bill to cut the interest rate on federally subsidized student loans to 3.4 percent from 6.8 percent.

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "DeepBlue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives.*

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